

The Threat of International Terrorism against Japan

I. Japan as a Target for Terrorism

The threat of international terrorism caused mainly by Islamic extremists is increasing, and Japan was named as a target for terrorist attack in statements believed to have been made by Usama bin Ladin. A statement, which was aired in October 2003 on satellite broadcasts in Qatar, warned of continued attacks against the United States, and suggested that attacks would be made on the United Kingdom, Spain, Australia, Poland, Japan, Italy, and Gulf states such as Kuwait. Moreover, in a statement aired on an Arabic website in May 2004, a reward of ten kilograms of gold was offered for killing Mr. Kofi Annan, the United Nations Secretary-General, and others, one

kilogram of gold for killing soldiers from the United States or the United Kingdom, and 500 grams of gold for killing persons from allied countries such as Japan and Italy.



Usama bin Ladin (Photo: Jiji Press)

In Japan, there are many US-related facilities considered by Islamic extremists as targets for terrorism, meaning that there is the fear that they could be under attack.

Furthermore, as seen by the bomb attacks in Indonesia, the threat of large-scale, indiscriminate terrorist attacks is reaching the Southeast Asian region, which is geographically close in proximity to Japan.

II. Illegal Entering and Leaving of Japan by an Individual Linked to "Al-Qaeda"

Under such circumstances, a Frenchman linked to "Al-Qaeda" who was placed on the international wanted list by Interpol for attempted murder and terrorist bomb attacks was arrested in Germany in December 2003. It was found that he had been illegally entering and leaving Japan repeatedly by using passports belonging to others. Furthermore, it came to light that a member of different Islamic extremist group had been temporarily living in Japan with him, highlighting the fact that international terrorists had been hiding in Japan.

Many people from Islamic countries are living and forming communities in Japan. It is of concern that in the future, Islamic extremists may take advantage of such communities to procure funds and materials, as well as to take various opportunities to influence youths into becoming extremists.



Man linked to "Al-Qaeda" who was hiding in Japan (Photo: Jiji Press)

III. Terrorist Attacks Affecting Japanese Nationals

1. Terrorist Incidents in Iraq Involving Japanese Nationals

There have been a number of terrorist incidents in which Japanese nationals or Japan's national interests have been affected abroad. In Iraq in particular, there have been a series of incidents where Japanese nationals were taken hostage by militant groups.

An overview of the hostage incidents, murder cases, and the like concerning Japanese nationals in Iraq is as follows:

A. Murder incident of Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials in Iraq

In November 2003 two Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials were attacked by an unknown assailant approximately 30 kilometers south of Tikrit. They were murdered along with their driver.

B. Hostage incident of three Japanese nationals in Iraq

Three Japanese nationals were taken hostage in Fallujah by a militant group identifying itself as "Saraya-Al-Mujahedeen" in April 2004. In exchange for the release of the three Japanese nationals they had taken as hostages, the militant group demanded the withdrawal of the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) of Japan. Despite this, the Japanese nationals were later released safely.



The hostage and murder incident of a Japanese national in Iraq making top headlines in various Iraqi newspapers (Photo: Kyodo Press)

In addition, two Japanese nationals were captured in the same month by an unknown assailant in the suburbs of Baghdad, but were later released safely.

C. Murder incident of Japanese journalists in Iraq

A car carrying two Japanese journalists and two Iraqi nationals was attacked by an unknown assailant in the outskirts of Baghdad in May 2004, and both of the Japanese journalists and one Iraqi national were killed.

D. Hostage and murder incident of a Japanese national in Iraq

A militant group identifying itself as the Islamic extremist organization "Tanzim Qaidat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn (Al-Qaeda Jihad Organization in the Land of the Two Rivers)," which is believed to be led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, issued a statement that they had taken a Japanese tourist hostage. The militant group later murdered the hostage.

E. Possible hostage incident of a Japanese national in Iraq

A convoy guarded by a private UK security company was attacked by a militant group identifying themselves as "Ansar al-Sunnah" in the suburbs of Hit in May 2005, and a Japanese national working for this company went missing.

"Ansar al-Sunnah" is said to be working in connection with the organization led by Zarqawi.

2. Other Terrorist Attacks Affecting Japanese Nationals

The seizure of the Japanese Ambassador's residence in Peru by a Peruvian leftist terrorist organization in December 1996 forced people to reevaluate the threat that terrorism poses to Japan's national interests as well as to Japanese nationals living abroad.

While the threat of terrorist attacks by Islamic extremists continued to rise in recent years, there have been a number of cases where our national interests or Japanese nationals living abroad were affected by the terrorist acts thought to be committed by Islamic extremists, such as by becoming the target of these acts.

In November 1997, an attack on tourists took place at the Hatshepsut Temple in Luxor, Egypt that left 62 people dead, including 10 Japanese nationals, and 24 others injured, including one Japanese national, from random shootings by a militant group. The largest Islamic extremist organization in Egypt, "Gama'a al-Islamiyya," was identified as being responsible for this incident based on their claiming responsibility for the act.

The abduction of Japanese engineers took place in the Kyrgyz Republic located in central Asia in August 1999. Seven people, including four Japanese nationals, who were engaged in a resource development survey for Japan International Cooperation Agency were kidnapped, with the Japanese nationals later being released in October of the same year. It is believed that the members of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which is reported to be connected to Usama bin Ladin, was behind this incident.

The terrorist attacks on the United States in September 2001 resulted in the deaths of 24 Japanese nationals, including both those aboard the high jacked aircrafts and those who were caught in the collapsing World Trade Center.

Two Japanese nationals fell victim to the terrorist bomb attacks in Bali, Indonesia which took place in October 2002.

In the series of terrorist bomb attacks in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in May 2003, vehicles carrying a large amount of explosives ran into three locations in the residential area for foreigners and exploded, killing 34 people and

injuring 194 others, including several Japanese nationals. "Al-Qaeda" is presumed to be responsible for this series of attacks.



Simultaneous bomb attacks in Bali, Indonesia (October 2005)

In the simultaneous terrorist bomb attacks in Bali, Indonesia which took place in October 2005, one Japanese national fell victim.